



**Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 957:
An Act Concerning the Oversight of Health Care in Correctional Institutions
by the Department of Public Health**

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Chairs and members of the Public Health Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 957: An Act Concerning the Oversight of Health Care in Correctional Institutions by the Department of Public Health on behalf of Universal Healthcare Foundation of Connecticut.

Universal is committed to accelerating the movement for health justice because health is a human right and core to social justice and equity. For us, universal means everybody – including those in our carceral system. Health justice cannot be achieved unless we address the inequities faced by those most impacted by injustice.

We support this bill because it is a step towards protecting the quality of health care that our incarcerated residents receive in correctional institutions.

Connecticut is currently the only state where the Department of Corrections (DOC) oversees and operates its own health care system. Last year the Public Health Committee sought to set forth actions to address these issues with SB 448 which became PA 22-133. Our request is that the Public Health Committee step forward as courageously as it did last year and implement regulation and oversight of the Department of Correction's health care system.

Mass incarceration disproportionately affects Black and Brown community members. This is evident as only six Connecticut cities are home to more than 50% of the state's incarcerated population but only 17% of the state's total population.¹ This has also affected the life expectancy of residents in those cities. The live expectancy in Northeast Hartford is 68.9 years old, in comparison to life expectancy in the rest of

¹ https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2017/06/26/life_expectancy/

Connecticut being 78.4 years old.² It is evident that our Black and Brown communities are negatively impacted by the shortcomings of the DOC.

We urge the Committee to create a holistic, comprehensive approach to oversight by establishing a Correctional Health Review Board within the Department of Public Health, in combination with the standards and accreditation provided by the [National Commission on Correctional Healthcare](#). This proposed Board would review reports from the Department of Corrections on health outcomes for incarcerated individuals and returning citizens, health care staffing and health related incidents. It would also provide policy and procedure recommendations.

Representation on a Correctional Health Review Board should include all stakeholders, including those who deliver inmate medical services in the facilities. They are intimately aware of the problems in the existing delivery system and are best positioned to identify solutions that benefit their patients, colleagues, and the state as a whole.

We also suggest that representation on the Board includes those receiving health care services in the carceral system. Often it is those who are most greatly impacted that do not have a "seat at the table." We urge you to consider how incarcerated individuals can be a part of the discussions about the health care they receive.

We urge the Committee to support this bill with these changes.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in favor of SB 957: An Act Concerning the Oversight of Health Care in Correctional Institutions by the Department of Public Health. It is of the utmost importance that the Committee and Connecticut lawmakers vote in favor of this bill, to improve the outcomes for incarcerated individuals, DOC health care workers, and returning citizens.

Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut's mission is to accelerate the movement for health justice for everybody because health is a human right and core to social justice and equity.

² <https://www.cthealth.org/latest-news/blog-posts/dear-connecticut-residents-your-neighborhood-really-does-determine-how-long-youll-live/#:~:text=In%20Northeast%20Hartford%2C%20the%20life,tops%20that%2C%20at%2084.6%20years>